Qatar Museums Authority

Qatar Museums (formerly the **Qatar Museums Authority**[1]) is a Qatari government entity that oversees the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, MIA Park, QM Gallery at Katara, ALRIWAQ DOHA Exhibition Space, the Al Zubarah World Heritage Site Visitor Centre,[2] and archaeological projects throughout Qatar, as well as the development of future projects and museums that will highlight its collections across multiple areas of activity including Orientalist art, photography, sports, children's education, and wildlife conservation.

Contents

Governance

Cultural policy
- Qatar's National Vision 2030
- Membership of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee

Current and future museums
- Museum of Islamic Art (MIA)
  - MIA Park
- National Museum of Qatar
- 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum
- Orientalist Museum

Galleries and exhibition spaces
- QM Gallery
- ALRIWAQ DOHA Exhibition Space
- Fire Station: Artists in Residence

Archaeology, architectural conservation and cultural tourism
- Al Zubarah: A UNESCO World Heritage Site

Public art in Qatar

Cultural Programmes

Cultural Diplomacy Program
- Qatar Japan 2012
- Qatar UK 2013, Year of culture
- Qatar Brazil 2014

Publications

Qatar Museums

Front view of "The QM Tower, Qatar Museums building in Doha, Qatar"

Established	2005
Location	Doha, Qatar
Public transit access	QM Tower, Al Meena Street, Doha, Qatar PO Box 2777.
Website	qm.org.qa (http://www.qm.org.qa/) 25°17′19.1″N 51°32′45.33″E

Education
References
External links

Governance

Qatar Museums is overseen by a board of trustees headed by Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.[3]

Cultural policy

Qatar Museums is a key implementer of Qatari cultural policies, in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage.[4]

Qatar's National Vision 2030

Qatar Museums is one of the organizations carrying out Qatar's National Vision 2030 program for comprehensive development, progress and prosperity for Qatar. Heritage-led developments play a key role in this program, for among its challenges is the wish to mold modernization around local culture and traditions, maintaining Arab and Islamic identity while showing openness towards other cultures.[5] Sheikha Al Mayassa's mission is for Qatar Museums to turn Qatar into a cultural powerhouse. The Economist reported that a trustee said: “Above all, we want the QMA to be a ‘cultural instigator', a catalyst of arts projects worldwide”.[4] The implementation of cultural policies by the QMA contributed to Doha been named the Arab Capital of Culture in 2010, an initiative taken by the Arab League under the UNESCO.

Membership of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee

The Qatar Museums Authority was the bid leader for Qatar's successful candidature to join the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 2011.[6] Qatar also had its first World Heritage site, Al Zubarah Archaeological Site, inscribed during the afternoon session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee on 22 June 2013 in Phom Penh, Cambodia.[7]

Current and future museums

Qatar Museums' museums have received worldwide attention, particularly the Museum of Islamic art (MIA), putting themselves in line with other museum developments in the area such as Abu Dhabi's (UAE) projected Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Louvre Abu Dhabi.[8][9]

Critics such as Hans-Ulrich Obrist, director of London's Serpentine Gallery, have argued that Doha takes a different approach to museums from that of Abu Dhabi, aspiring to a new model that does not "copy existing models or replicate western museums, but acknowledges local difference".[8] Martyn Best, director of Cultural Innovations said that "Qatar is the furthest ahead in thinking about how to develop a contemporary Middle Eastern model", searching for a new paradigm for the museums of the 21st century.[8]

All the museums developed by Qatar Museums have included Islamic or Qatari elements either in their architectural design or in their overall concept.[10] In this way its strives in the creation of its own brand trying not to be too commercial. This policy is a reflection of the Qatar Foundation's fourth pillar 'community

The Museum of Islamic Art with Doha skyline in the background

development' which strives to help foster a progressive society while also enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.[11][12][13] Qatar Museums has repeatedly chosen world-famous foreign architects to design its museums but they insist the architects sought inspiration in Middle Eastern architectural models.[10]

Museum of Islamic Art (MIA)

View of the MIA from the inside

The museum includes two floors of permanent exhibition galleries, one main temporary gallery, two outdoor courtyards overlooking the city's skyline, an education center, a library, as well as a vast atrium area with a café and a gift shop.

Jodidio, author of the first publication on MIA describes it as the development that will "bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, highlighting the power of culture to transcend differences and cross artificial barriers" inscribing it in the Qatar Foundation's fourth pillar.[10]

War mask from the MIA collection

MIA Park

Adjacent to the Museum of Islamic Art is the MIA Park, a 280,000 square meter seafront, crescent-shaped park designed by the Pei Partnership Architects of New York City. It includes a sculpture plaza featuring a commissioned work by US Artist Richard Serra titled "7", the artist's first public work in the Middle East.

MIA Park hosts public activities such as film screenings, sport events, musical events and public programs.[14]

National Museum of Qatar

The new National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) opened to the public on March 28, 2019. The museum features an innovative design by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel that is inspired by the desert rose and grows organically around the original 20th century palace of Sheikh Abdullah Bin Jassim Al Thani. This important monument to Qatar's past is now preserved as the heart of the new NMoQ.[15] The relation between the new and old building is part of creating the bridge between the past and the present advocated by Sheikha Al Mayassa for it is the way to "define ourselves instead of forever being defined by others… celebrating our identity."[16]

Located on a 1.5 million-square-foot site at the south end of Doha Corniche, the NMoQ building rises from the sea and is connected to the shore by two pedestrian bridges and a road bridge.

3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum

The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic & Sports Museum is a planned national and international center for sports history, heritage, and knowledge. Although the museum is not yet open to public in 2018, it aims to preserve, store, investigate and exhibit sports and sports objects.[17]

Orientalist Museum

The Orientalist Museum has a major collection of Orientalist art. Home to a large collection of paintings, watercolors, sculptures, and drawings, it is the only institution of its kind in the world. Collectively, these works trace the history of Orientalism back to the early 16th century.

The Orientalist Museum aims to map an influential period in art history through future programmes and exhibitions and further appreciation and understanding of the relationship between East and West.[18]

Although the Orientalist Museum is a museum without walls[19] hence not currently open to the public, significant artworks are loaned to international museums for exhibitions on a regular basis. Work is also displayed in exhibitions organised by the Orientalist Museum in Doha and abroad.

Galleries and exhibition spaces

QM Gallery

QM Gallery was founded in 2010 as a space for temporary exhibitions organized by Qatar Museums. Located in Katara (cultural village), Building 10, the gallery is a platform for the upcoming museums in Qatar to present their collections, projects, and visions. The gallery also hosts exhibitions of Qatari artists and organizes international exhibitions. The wide range of the exhibitions – such as photography, archaeology, art, sports, architecture and sculpture – makes Qatar Museums Gallery a place of encounter for a broad local and international audience.[20]

QMA Gallery

ALRIWAQ DOHA Exhibition Space

Located next to the Museum of Islamic Art, ALRIWAQ DOHA is another temporary exhibition space by Qatar Museums covering a total area of 5000 square-meter. Inaugurated in December 2010, ALRIWAQ DOHA provides a venue for local exhibitions by Qatar Museums' museums and departments displaying their historic objects and collections, as well as shows by international artists organized by QM in line with its vision to be a cultural instigator seeking to stimulate debate and discussion.

Fire Station: Artists in Residence

The Fire Station: Artists in Residence program is hosted by Qatar Museums Public Arts Department. This program took the iconic old Civil Defense building in Doha and is transforming it into an open space for creativity. Designed by Qatari architect, Ibrahim Al Jaidah, the Fire Station will have 24 studios and a 700 sq. m gallery, housed in the old garage, to be used by artists participating in the program as well as the local community. It will also host a café, restaurant, bookshop, art supply shop, a cinema, and artist facilities.

This project "will allow for cultural dialogue and exchange between artists living in Qatar and the rest of the world." The rolling nine-month program will be open to Qataris and other artists in the Persian Gulf region, as well as international artists based in Qatar.[21]

Archaeology, architectural conservation and cultural tourism

Since its establishment, Qatar Museums has managed several archaeological and architectural conservation projects such as surveys, excavations, restoration, rehabilitation projects. These efforts helped uncover, document, protect and promote many archaeological sites, forts, towers, mosques and old buildings across Qatar preserving, therefore, the country's culture and heritage.[22]

Al Zubarah: A UNESCO World Heritage Site

Al Zubarah lies approximately 100 km north-west of Doha. Founded in ca. 1760 by the Banu Utba tribe from Kuwait, Al Zubarah's location in the central Persian Gulf predestined it to become the premier pearling and trading town in this region after the demise of Basra in Iraq.

View of Al Zubarah Fort

Covering an area of 60 hectares, Al Zubarah Archaeological Site is the first entry for a Qatari site on the international register and one of 911 natural and cultural properties worldwide.

First excavations in Al Zubarah were undertaken in 1980 by the National Council of Culture, Arts and Heritage and between 2002 and 2005 by Qatar Museums. Since 2009 a joint project between Copenhagen University and QM, the so-called Qatar Islamic Archaeology and Heritage Project, has led to large-scale excavations and restorations, as well as to historical, anthropological and environmental research efforts in Al Zubarah and its hinterland.[23]

Public art in Qatar

Qatar Museums' Public art department is responsible for creating an artist residency program for young local artists to help them develop their skills and horizons, organizing exhibitions featuring international artists and overseeing the installation of artwork by renowned artists in the public realm in Qatar. Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Al Thani, QM Chairperson has said: “Through displaying various forms of art in public space, we aim to inspire local talent and establish an organic connection between art and the local community.”[24]

Cultural Programmes

The remit of Qatar Museums goes beyond developing museums and art galleries and restoring archaeological sites to other activities, such as organizing and sponsoring various events locally and internationally. Notable examples of these are: the organization of the Doha Tribeca Film Festival in 2009,[25] the installation of a Louise Bourgeois giant sculpture in the Qatar National Convention Center,[26] the sponsoring of the World Cinema Foundation,[27] the sponsoring of exhibitions abroad by international artists including Japanese artist Takashi Murakami's exhibition in Château de Versailles,[28][29] and English artist and art collector Damien Hirst's exhibition at Tate Modern in 2012.[30][31]

Cultural Diplomacy Program

Qatar Japan 2012

2012 marked 40 years of positive diplomatic relations between the state of Qatar and Japan. To celebrate this, a year-long series of cultural, sporting and business related activities were held under the banner of Qatar Japan 2012.[32] The program put together for this year included exhibitions, events and activities in both countries such as Takashi Murakami's exhibition "Ego" at ALRIWAQ DOHA exhibition space[33] and "Pearls: Jewels from the Sea" exhibition in Kobe, Japan.[34] The highlight event of Qatar Japan 2012 was "Qatar Week: Ferjaan in Tokyo"[35] at Roppongi Hills, Tokyo, Japan, which was an occasion to foster understanding of Qatari culture and achievement, and offered opportunities for Japanese public to interact with Qatar through a variety of cultural activities.

Qatar UK 2013, Year of culture

Qatar UK 2013 is a project coordinated by the British Council and Qatar Museums, in association with several partners, including leading arts and education institutions in both countries. As well as building new relationships and supporting existing partnerships in education, sport and science, the year aims to promote an awareness and appreciation of culture, achievements and heritage, and increase engagement between people and institutions in both countries in the spirit of innovation, openness and learning.[36] The events and activities are taking place in both Qatar and the United Kingdom.

Qatar Brazil 2014

Qatar Brazil 2014 is a year-long cultural exchange programme dedicated to connecting people in the State of Qatar and the Federative Republic of Brazil through culture, community, and sport. Qatar Brazil 2014 was announced in Brasilia on 18 December 2013 during Qatar National Day celebrations at the Qatar embassy in Brasilia, this cultural program aims to strengthen bilateral relations and create lasting partnerships between Qatar and Brazil by working with partners and sponsors to bring exhibitions, festivals, competitions, and other cultural exchange activities to both countries. Qatar Brazil 2014 is held under the patronage of QM Chairperson Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in partnership with Qatar's Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage.. The year officially commenced on 27 January 2014 with a launch reception at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha

Publications

Qatar Museums releases regularly publications on arts, archaeology, Islamic history, and oriental studies; both in English and Arabic. Examples of these books are "Qatari-British relations 1914–1949" by Yousif Ibrahim Al Abdullah (1999),"From Cordoba to Samarqand" by Dr. Sabiha Al Khemir (2006), and "Traditional Architecture in Qatar" by Mohammad Jassim Al-Khulaifi (2003).[37]

Education

Qatar Museums entered into a three-way partnership with University College London and Qatar Foundation in 2011. University College London has established UCL Qatar at Education City, a center of excellence for the study of museology, conservation and archaeology. UCL provides master's degrees in these areas, as well as short specialist courses delivered for Qatar Museums staff.

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External links

- Qatar Museums homepage (http://www.qm.org.qa/ar/) (English (http://www.qm.org.qa/en/))
- Qatar Museums Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/QatarMuseumsAuthority) Provides up to date information on Qatar Museums projects and activities.

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